



EUROPE

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Habsburg: Austro-Hungarian heir's heart buried

The heart of the last heir to the Austro-Hungarian Empire, Otto von Habsburg, has been buried in central Hungary.

The funeral of the last crown prince took place on Saturday in the Austrian capital Vienna, where his body was buried alongside those of his ancestors in the Imperial crypt.

His heart was buried separately in accordance with Habsburg tradition.

The event is also an echo of medieval aristocratic custom.

Mr Habsburg said he wanted his heart buried in Hungary to show the affection he held for the country, Austria's 19th-Century partner in the Austro-Hungarian empire.

His heart was buried in a private ceremony on Sunday evening in the Benedictine Abbey in Pannonhalma, near Budapest, after a requiem mass.

The service in the 13th-Century Gothic chapel was simple compared to the pomp of the Vienna funeral, says the BBC's Bethany Bell in Pannonhalma.

Mr Habsburg's heart, in a silver urn, was placed on a table in front of the altar - surrounded by a wreath of red and white flowers in green leaves to represent Hungary's national colours.

At the end of the service his two sons carried the urn down to the crypt for burial.

Mr Habsburg, the son of the last emperor, died earlier this month at the age of 98.

His links to Pannonhalma Abbey dated back to the time of the monarchy when he was sent there as a boy to learn Hungarian, says our correspondent.

His family fled Austria when their empire collapsed at the end of World War I, and he spent many decades in exile before giving up his claim to the throne in 1961.

As a member of the European parliament for two decades, Mr Habsburg was a passionate advocate of European unity who dedicated himself to having former communist-ruled states brought into the EU.

European Commission President Jose Manuel Barroso paid tribute to him as "a great European... who gave an important impetus to the European project throughout his rich life".

The hearts of other members of the Habsburg dynasty have been kept in urns in Vienna's Imperial crypt, where their bodies have been taken for burial since 1632.

On Saturday thousands of Austrians and tourists lined the streets of Vienna's city centre ahead of a procession into St Stephen's Cathedral, where about 1,000 mourners had gathered.

Vienna's Cardinal Christoph Schoenborn presided over a funeral mass, attended by European royals including Sweden's King Carl Gustaf and Queen Silvia, Grand Duke Henri of Luxembourg and Prince Hans-Adam II of Liechtenstein.

Among the political figures at the ceremony were Austrian President Heinz Fischer, and the prime ministers of Croatia and Macedonia.



EUROPE

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Habsburg: Last heir to Austro-Hungarian empire dies

The eldest son of the last ruler of the Austro-Hungarian empire has died in Germany at the age of 98.

Otto von Habsburg was born in 1912, as the heir to the empire, but it collapsed at the end of World War I and the Habsburg family went into exile.

After World War II, Mr Habsburg became a champion of European unity during its Cold War division.

He served as a member of the European parliament for two decades. He is to be buried in the Austrian capital, Vienna.

Mr Habsburg only officially relinquished his claim to inherit the empire in 1961 and five years later was allowed to return to Austria for the first time since the family fled in 1919.

He was an opponent of the Nazis and spoke out against Germany's annexation of Austria in 1938.

In 1989 he helped organise the Pan-European Picnic demonstration on the border of Austria and Hungary.

The border was briefly opened, an event credited with helping usher in the fall of the Berlin Wall months later.

Mr Habsburg then dedicated himself to having the former communist-ruled states of eastern Europe brought into the EU.

European Commission President Jose Manuel Barroso paid tribute to him as "a great European... who gave an important impetus to the European project throughout his rich life".

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